

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Thursday, December 17, 2009

H1N1 Vaccines Now Recommended for Most Wyoming Residents

The Wyoming Department of Health is recommending that nearly all Wyoming residents who haven't yet received a vaccination to protect themselves from swine (novel H1N1) flu should seek out the vaccine.

"Supplies of the H1N1 vaccine are fairly plentiful across the state," said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer. More than 147,000 doses have so far been delivered in Wyoming.

"While flu activity is quiet in Wyoming right now, there's a lot of winter left and we don't know what the coming months will mean for H1N1 flu activity. It certainly could flare up again. That's why it's important to get vaccinated against the strain," Sherard said.

"We've been saying all along this is not a normal flu season because of the H1N1 strain," Sherard said. "This season, for the best possible protection, most people need both a seasonal flu vaccination and a special one to fight the new strain. Vaccines are the single most effective weapon we have to fight influenza."

Sherard noted influenza vaccines take roughly 10 days to offer effective protection. "It's not very helpful to wait until friends, classmates or coworkers may already be ill with flu to get vaccinated. Getting protected before the flu is circulating around you is a far smarter idea."

Sherard said influenza vaccines have a proven track record of safety. "Novel H1N1 vaccine is essentially no different. No corners were cut in its development," he said.

The H1N1 vaccine began arriving in Wyoming in late October. "Because initial supplies were limited, vaccination efforts were focused on people most threatened by H1N1," Sherard said. "Shipments have grown and supplies of the vaccine are now far less limited. Counties are opening up their distribution well beyond those first target groups."

Sherard is also reminding parents that children under age 10 need two doses of the H1N1 vaccine. "Some young children who received their first dose are likely due for that second vaccination by now," he said.

The Wyoming Department of Health has been ordering the swine flu vaccine for shipment to approved providers with amounts based on population. County public health officials are coordinating much of the distribution. The federal government is paying for the H1N1 vaccine; some providers may charge a small administration fee.

“Our public health nursing offices and local healthcare partners around the state did a great job of reaching out to the initial vaccine target groups,” Sherard said. He added county public health nursing offices are the best source for current, local information about vaccine supply and availability.

More information about swine (novel H1N1) flu and vaccination in Wyoming is also available online at www.health.wyo.gov .

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